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Sent: Thur 6/16/2016 1:09:52 PM
Subject: hoosick falls

New York Times: Hoosick Falls Residents Take Anger Over Tainted Water to New York's Capitol

By JESSE McKINLEY

June 15, 2016

ALBANY — The residents of Hoosick Falls came to the State Capitol on Wednesday with the numbers hung around their necks, scribbled on their arms, and described on hand-drawn posters:

“Dad, 68.”

“Grandma, 85.”

“Teacher, 137.”

The numbers represented how much a toxic chemical, measured in parts per billion, has infiltrated their bodies as it has contaminated their village's water.

Located about 30 miles northeast of Albany, Hoosick Falls has been the epicenter for growing statewide concerns about perfluorooctanoic acid, or PFOA, the toxic chemical that has been linked in some studies to increased risk for cancer and other serious ailments.

Last year, PFOA was confirmed in dangerously high levels in the village's drinking water, which comes from municipal wells. Late January, more than a month after a federal warning about the water, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo ordered the installation of new filtration systems, blood testing, and other measures.

In recent weeks, those in and around Hoosick Falls have been receiving the blood test results, and the news, for some, has been troubling: On Wednesday, several who came to Albany reported test levels as much as 100 times the national average. Such results have reignited fears in Hoosick Falls, and infuriated residents like Loreen Hackett, who denounced Mr. Cuomo and the state's reaction, particularly in light of other water contamination crises in places like Flint, Mich.

“We are his Flint,” said Ms. Hackett, holding a photograph of her grandchildren, Corey and Alyssa, both of whom tested at more than 50 times the national average.

Moments after she spoke, Ms. Hackett and others from Hoosick Falls were invited to an hourlong meeting with Jim Malatras, the state's director of operations, who has headed much of the state's response to the PFOA crisis. Afterward, several residents expressed gratitude for the meeting, which resulted in promises to disclose more results from testing, and bringing staff to Hoosick Falls from Mount Sinai Hospital in Manhattan to consult with residents.

Left unfulfilled, however, was a wish for legislative hearings on the state's reaction to the contamination, even as the Legislature prepares to wrap up its session for the year on Thursday. (Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, was not available to meet with residents, according to his office, because of meetings with legislative leaders.)

The decision not to hold hearings earned the derision of State Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, whose district includes Hoosick Falls and who has criticized the State Senate majority leader, John J. Flanagan, a fellow Republican. And while Mr. McLaughlin thanked Mr. Cuomo's office for the meeting on Wednesday, he did not ease up on Senator Flanagan, who he said was ignoring the plight of children in the village.

"How do you look at them and not have hearings?" he said.

Scott Reif, a spokesman for Mr. Flanagan, said that "our primary focus is on ensuring that the progress that has been made on behalf of the residents of Hoosick Falls continues," and that he had been in almost daily contact with the local state senator, Kathy Marchione, about Hoosick Falls.

Michael Whyland, a spokesman for the Assembly speaker, Carl E. Heastie, a Democrat, said that the primary concern was getting clean water, but that "if hearings are warranted in the future then we can do that."

The State Health Department in early June found that the median number for 2,081 residents who were tested was a little more than 28 parts per billion, or nearly 15 times the national median for those 12 or older.

Hoosick Falls was once a center for production of products treated with Teflon, whose production involves PFOA. The state has said that a local plant — Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics — was the source of the contamination. The company has said it is cooperating with the authorities, and paid for a new carbon-filtration system and bottled water for the village.

Mr. Cuomo declared the village a state Superfund site in January, but was also criticized for not visiting Hoosick Falls until mid-March, when that system became operational. On Wednesday, Mr. Malatras defended the administration's response and noted that "the Legislature deals with legislative hearings."

But he also seemed sympathetic to the village's residents. "In any situation like this anxiety and emotions are running very high," he said.

Before their meeting with Mr. Malatras, one resident, MaryAnn Jacobs, was in tears talking about test results, showing her children's levels at more than 20 times the national median. Her 10-year-old daughter, Hailey, wrote a letter to the governor; it read, in part: "My mom came to Hoosick Falls for a good reason, but now she knows the whole time she was trying to raise us we were being poisoned. She feels it's her fault. But it's not her fault."

Photo Residents of Hoosick Falls, whose water supply was contaminated by PFOA, called for legislative hearings on the matter at a news conference in Albany. Credit Nathaniel Brooks for The New York Times

A version of this article appears in print on June 16, 2016, on page A21 of the New York edition with the headline: Anger Over Tainted Water Sends Villagers to Albany.

Politico: Hoosick Falls residents demand answers at state Capitol

By Scott Waldman

06/15/16 04:28 PM EDT

ALBANY—Angry residents from Hoosick Falls stormed into the state Capitol on Wednesday to demand a full accounting of why the state, federal and local government took so long to warn them about the dangerous toxic chemicals in their water.

Teachers, children, grandparents and stay-at-home mothers scrawled the level of their blood contamination on their bodies or wore signs with their PFOA levels and that of their children. Ten-year-old Hailey Bussey, whose PFOA blood level of 51.5 is 25 times the national average, carried a handwritten letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, asking why the administration “left us to die like sick kittens.”

Story Continued Below

“My mom came to Hoosick Falls for a good reason,” she wrote. “But now she knows that the whole time she was trying to raise us, we were being poisoned! She feels it’s her fault.”

Residents of Hoosick Falls drove 45 minutes to the state Capitol to ask why the Cuomo administration had taken so long to warn them about drinking their water and why the administration resisted warnings from federal regulators about the dangerous levels of PFOA in their public water supply.

Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, a Republican who represents the area, said he invited the village residents to the Capitol to face the lawmakers and the administration that had failed to protect them. As he has for months, McLaughlin called for legislative hearings to fully account for the failures of government to warn Hoosick Falls about the dangerous levels of PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid, which has been linked to cancer, thyroid problems and other serious health issues.

Among other requests, Hoosick Falls residents said they wanted an increase in biomonitoring for their health problems, a new water source and health department data that provides a more accurate look at the PFOA levels of those on the village water supply.

Loreen Hackett, whose PFOA level is more than 125 times the national average, said she has been seeking an answer for months as to whether she can eat tomatoes grown in her yard. She said she was terrified for her grandchildren, who also have very high levels of PFOA in their

blood. She said she also wants to know if the air quality monitoring in the village, where chimneys spewed chemical-tainted smog for months, turned up anything dangerous.

"We're all scared, I'm sure a lot of people are going to see doctors and have no answers," said Loreen Hackett. "We need to continue to be monitored. We still don't have a new water source."

The issue of PFOA in water has become particularly urgent since the federal EPA determined last month that drinking water containing more than 70 parts per trillion of PFOA and PFOS, a related chemical, is harmful to human health. The municipal water supply in Hoosick Falls tested at more than 600 parts per trillion.

The Cuomo administration took issue with EPA warnings that it was dangerous, leaving locals exposed for months.

Hundreds of people in Hoosick Falls now have elevated levels of the chemical, which is used in industrial manufacturing of non-stick goods, including food packaging, furniture, cookware and firefighting foam. The water supply for other communities in New York has recently tested positive for the chemical.

Not long after the group rallied around the door to Gov. Andrew Cuomo's office, they were invited to have an impromptu meeting with top Cuomo aide Jim Malatras. As the group angrily questioned Malatras on why it took so long for the Department of Health to warn them against drinking their water, he focused on St. Gobain, the company that owns the factory connected to pollution of the municipal water supply, according to audio from the meeting. He did not address their questions about why the Cuomo administration resisted sounding a public warning for more than a year, as POLITICO reported last week.

The group was particularly critical of the state Department of Health's response to the crisis. Even after the blood tests were mailed out, they said, the state was still giving them confusing information. The residents requested a more complete data set that fully traces PFOA blood levels for village residents.

Malatras told the group that the state Department of Health was struggling to process the blood tests because the effects of PFOA on the human body were still being studied. He said Cuomo had told him to "do everything humanly possible" to help people in Hoosick Falls and that he had personally made sure water filters installed in homes with private water wells were up to specifications.

Malatras told the residents that it was up to the legislature to hold the hearings. However, both legislative leaders, who spent their day hammering out final session agreements behind closed doors, have been noncommittal on the possibility of holding hearings. (As the Hoosick Falls residents met with the Cuomo administration, the state Senate was busy honoring a spelling bee champion.)

McLaughlin said he was pleased the administration had heard residents' concerns, even as they had to travel to the Capitol for the meeting many had been requesting for months. He said the situation still required more resources from the state, including mobilizing the National Guard to knock on every door in the village to urge blood tests. He also said the state legislature needed to take a more comprehensive look at the problem, to see if other communities may be facing similar challenges.

"It's incumbent upon this legislature to act and stop shirking their responsibility, and I don't care if that is the GOP Senate or the Democrat Assembly — wake up, do your job and hold the hearings for these people," he said, adding, "You look at these faces and you tell them that they don't need hearings, I just don't know how you sleep at night."

After the meeting, administration officials promised additional blood testing for nearby Petersburg, which also has high PFOA levels. Malatras also said the governor's office would take a more active role in the response and help with costs of a study to connect the public to the municipal water supply, and that the state would investigate insurance obstacles to getting cancer screenings.

Hoosick Falls, N.Y., resident Loreen Hackett speaks during a news conference at the state Capitol Wednesday. | AP Photo/Mike Groll

Times Union

Hoosick Falls residents make their PFOA voices heard

After angry news conference, a productive meeting with top Cuomo aide

By Casey Seiler

Published 10:48 pm, Wednesday, June 15, 2016

Albany

Ten-year-old Hoosick Falls resident Hailey Bussey wore a mockingjay necklace — a warrior's symbol from the "Hunger Games" books — into a Capitol meeting with a top aide to Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

Wednesday's hour-long sitdown with state Operations Director Jim Malatras was impromptu, coming just after an emotional news conference that included Bussey's reading of her scathing letter to the governor. "If we die of this or if the young ones deal with future disability, you will come down with us with guilt and dishonor," it read in part.

Bussey and her mother, Maryann Jacobs, joined roughly two dozen residents of the Rensselaer County community to voice their outrage over what they describe as a too-slow response from public officials to the perfluorooctanoic acid or PFOA contamination of the Rensselaer County community's water supply, and the state Legislature's continued unwillingness to hold hearings on the crisis.

The substance, used in the production of non-stick kitchenware, has been linked to elevated levels of numerous maladies, including several forms of cancer. In January, Cuomo's administration designated contaminated areas as a Superfund site, and has installed filters on water systems with elevated PFOA levels.

Hoosick Falls residents make their PFOA voices heard

Earlier this month, residents in and around Hoosick Falls began receiving the results of state-sponsored blood tests that in many cases showed PFOA levels far above the national average — information that sparked new anguish that was palpable in the news conference.

"We are here today because we have been fed lies and PFOA by the Cuomo administration," said Michele Baker, a single mother who has been one of the most vocal members of the community.

After the news conference, the delegation and Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, R-Schaghticoke, reconvened on the Capitol's second floor and demanded an audience with Cuomo, who was in the building. After a short wait before the closed door to the Executive Chamber, they were ushered in to meet with Malatras, who has functioned as the administration's point man on the PFOA response.

Courtesy Kyle Hughes, NYSNYS.com. Media: hearst_newspapers

Audio of the meeting — provided by Karen DeWitt of New York State Public Radio, who eased into Malatras' office as the residents entered and declined a request to leave — revealed a session that began with more venting of anger and anxiety that gradually turned into a discussion of the history of the state's response and the path forward.

Malatras told the group that the governor, who was at that moment meeting with legislative leaders a few steps away, would meet with the residents at some point in the future. He added that once Cuomo became involved, he told his team to "do everything humanly possible" for the affected residents, and that the governor personally made sure that water filters installed in many homes were up to specifications.

Several times, Malatras tried to turn the focus away from the administration to the company that has been designated as one of the likely polluters, Saint Gobain Performance Plastics. (Facilities now owned by Honeywell have also been identified by the state Department of Environmental Conservation as another likely source of PFOA.)

Malatras also promised more direct contact between the governor's office and the residents, saying "we will be the point of contact if you have questions."

Video by Kyle Hughes, NYSNYS.com Media: hearst_newspapers

Among the issues discussed were the state's implementation of blood testing on-site in Petersburg, the nearby Rensselaer County community that has also been afflicted by PFOA contamination from a local manufacturing plant. The state will also cover the costs of a study on the feasibility of connecting Hoosick Falls' public school district to the municipal water supply (the school is currently showing a very low or "non-detect" level of PFOA).

It will also release a Health Outcomes Review on illness and mortality trends in the affected area once that study has been approved by Mt. Sinai Hospital in Manhattan, which is working with the Department of Health to monitor the affected communities.

The administration will investigate potential insurance obstacles to getting cancer screenings for affected residents, and will bring staff from Mt. Sinai to Hoosick Falls for an information session

(or several) to supplement their current availability by telephone.

Emerging from the meeting, the residents appeared to have been at least partially mollified by much of what they had heard, including what they described as a more detailed account of the state's response in the months prior to December 2015, when the state Department of Health — following the lead of the federal Environmental Protection Agency — advised people to stop drinking water from the municipal system as well as from private wells with elevated levels of PFOA.

Listen to full audio of the meeting between Hoosick Falls residents and state Operations Director Jim Malatras at Capitol Confidential, <http://blog.timesunion.com/capitol/>.

Hoosick Falls music teacher Rob Allen summed up many residents' feelings, saying "the next few weeks will be critical" in determining whether the governor and his aides can regain the trust of local citizens.

Baker, who had decried the administration's "lies" in the news conference two hours earlier, said she received more answers in the meeting than at any other time since the contamination came to light.

"That was the first time we've gotten our questions pretty much answered," Baker said. "I feel better about it ... but we still want hearings — we're not backing down."

"I think it was a productive meeting," Malatras said a few hours later.

"Even with passions running high, there was a good dialogue in the room," he said. "And I think they saw a lot of the things that we were doing, and they had some suggestions for how we could do more."

Photo: John Carl D'Annibale

Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin (R,C,I-Troy) joins Hoosick Falls residents to deliver their PFOA results to the state Senate in person and once again call on the Legislature to hold hearings at the Capitol Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

Hoosick Falls resident Maryann Jacobs holds up a letter to Gov. Cuomo written by her 10-year-old daughter Hailey Bussey, right, during a rally calling for hearings on PFOA at the Capitol Wednesday June 15, 2016 .

Hoosick Falls residents Michelle Baker, left, and Loreen Hackett join in a rally at the Capitol calling for hearings on PFOA Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

Hoosick Falls High School senior Anna Wysocki, at podium, speaks during a rally calling for hearings on PFOA at the Capitol Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

Hoosick Falls resident Loreen Hackett, at podium, holds photos of her grandchildren Allyssa and Corey Aldrich during a rally calling for hearings on PFOA at the Capitol Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY.

A nine-year-old Hoosick Falls resident, name withheld by her mother, joins the rally at the Capitol to call for hearings on PFOA Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

Hoosick Falls residents rally at the Capitol to call for hearings on PFOA Wednesday June 15, 2016 in Albany, NY. (John Carl D'Annibale / Times Union)

WSJ

Hoosick Falls Residents Demand Action on Water-Contamination Crisis

They protested at Capitol building in Albany, calling for legislative hearings

By Mike Vilensky and Erica Orden

June 15, 2016 6:43 p.m. ET

ALBANY—Shaken by a water-contamination crisis, Hoosick Falls residents called on New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo and state lawmakers Wednesday to hold hearings and take other action before the legislative session ends.

Mr. Cuomo's administration earlier this year declared parts of the Rensselaer County village a state Superfund site, classifying a contaminant found in the area's water supply, perfluorooctanoic acid, as hazardous. The designation authorizes the state to investigate the source of the contaminant and remove it from the water supply.

State and local officials have said the contaminant, which has been linked to cancer in some studies but hasn't been labeled a carcinogen, may have come from an area plastics plant.

Hoosick Falls residents and local officials have criticized the state for not acting sooner. The Cuomo administration has said it was following federal guidelines.

Earlier this year, the Assembly said it would hold hearings discussing how the contamination occurred and how future incidents could be prevented. With the legislative session scheduled to end Thursday, however, the hearings still haven't been held.

An Assembly spokesman said "our focus has always been and continues to be to make sure people have clean drinking water. If hearings are warranted in the future, then we can do that."

Hoosick Falls residents protested at the Capitol building in Albany on Wednesday, wearing signs indicating the higher-than-normal PFOA levels in their blood. After storming the area surrounding the governor's office, they met with Jim Malatras, a Cuomo aide.

He told them that as a father he related to their worries and that Mr. Cuomo had directed him to do "everything humanly possible" for the residents.

Michele Baker, a 50-year-old Hoosick Falls resident, said after the meeting: "I feel better about it, but I still want answers from the Legislature. Still want hearings. We're not backing down."

Ms. Baker said that, among other demands, the group had requested that the state set up a field office in the town.

"We opened up on him," she said, of Mr. Malatras. "Because you know, we're moms, we're angry. We're dads, we're angry. We threw it all out on the table."

Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, with a photo of a child from Hoosick Falls, N.Y., speaks during a news conference at the state Capitol calling for hearings on the state's response to a contaminant in the community's drinking water. Photo: Mike Groll/Associated Press

Hoosick Falls residents demand legislative hearings on PFOA

By Ayla Ferrone Published: June 15, 2016, 4:18 pm Updated: June 15, 2016, 5:43 pm

ALBANY, N.Y. (NEWS10) – The people of Hoosick Falls are once again demanding legislative PFOA hearings, and on Wednesday they took their complaints directly to the second floor of the Capitol Building, along with Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin.

The people of Hoosick Falls want answers to questions like why so many people in their community, including children, have such high levels of PFOA in their blood.

What started as a press conference outside of the Senate Chambers turned into much more as Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin led the people of Hoosick Falls to Governor Andrew Cuomo's office to try to get some answers.

When Assemblyman McLaughlin found the doors to the second floor locked, he asked a nearby police officer for help, who then directed him to Governor Cuomo's receptionist.

Eventually, McLaughlin and the people from Hoosick Falls were let in.

They did not however, end up meeting with the Governor, but instead with State Director of Operations, Jim Malatras.

After the residents went into the meeting, the doors were once again locked and the media was not allowed inside.

Loreen Hackett is from Hoosick Falls, and she says the level of PFOA in her blood is 266. She is one of the people who stormed the Governor's Office Wednesday.

Hackett says she is more concerned about her two grandchildren who also have high PFOA levels in their blood.

She says it's time people in Hoosick Falls got some answers, and the way to get them is to have hearings.

"How is that not important when you look at these faces? How can you sit there and say you don't deserve those answers?"

People from Hoosick Falls told News10 they were appreciative of Wednesday's impromptu meeting, but still have a lot of unanswered questions and want those hearings to happen.

"Cory on the right is 6 ask you can see his number is 142," said Hackett. "My granddaughter Alyssa is 4. She's at 117"

That's why she says legislative hearings need to happen.

"This is the people's house and it's about time this house begins to listen to the people," she said.

Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin is standing behind the people of Hoosick falls from the beginning saying they deserve the answers to the questions they're asking.

"The people in Hoosick falls were denied vital information that they needed to keep their families safe," said McLaughlin Wednesday.

News10 was locked out of the meeting between the people from Hoosick Falls and Jim Malatras but he did later discuss the meeting.

"I understand their anxiety and fear," said Malatras. "That's why we want to bring in outside medical officials to help them. Any way we can be open and communicative were going to do it."

Malatras says while he wants to make sure things are getting done for the community, it's up to the legislative leaders to call for and hold hearings.

McLaughlin says he understands the executive branch can't hold the hearings, and turned his message right back to the senate and assembly.

"Do your job. Hold the hearings and stop ignoring the people of Hoosick falls," he said.

Hackett says the impromptu meeting was a step forward but she still wants the hearings.

"We can get the people in the room that we have all these questions for. And ask them," she said.

The people of Hoosick Falls say they did appreciate Malatras meeting with them today, but that there needs to be an open line of communication, and more often.

They also still want the hearings.

Upstate N.Y. town's residents demand action, answers on contaminated water crisis

BY Denis Slattery

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Thursday, June 16, 2016, 4:26 AM

Residents of an upstate town angry over state officials' haphazard handling of their contaminated water crisis flooded Albany on Wednesday seeking answers.

Loreen Hackett and about two dozen of her neighbors from the tiny hamlet of Hoosick Falls gathered outside the state Senate chamber hoisting signs with numbers showing how much perfluorooctanoic acid, PFOA, a chemical linked to cancer, is in their bodies.

They called on the Legislature to hold hearings. They called for a meeting with Gov. Cuomo.

They pleaded for answers.

"We need federal and state hearings to figure out what went wrong so that you, communities of New York and beyond, don't have to endure the same thing we have had to," said Rob Allen, a Hoosick Falls father of three who teaches music at a high school.

Residents of the Rensselaer County town began receiving their blood test results from the state Health Department in the past two weeks, months after they learned the chemical was in the water supply,

PFOA, used in the production of nonstick kitchenware, has been linked to elevated risk for numerous maladies, including several forms of cancer.

A burning question many residents want answered is why they were only told to stop drinking from their taps in December -- more than a year after officials learned of the contamination.

"If you opened this, and this was your child and these were your numbers, what would you do?" Hackett asked holding up a sheet of paper with her family's numbers. "What would you want to know? Wouldn't you want answers so that we can move forward?"

The group's effort and anger earned them an impromptu meeting with one of Cuomo's top aides, a day before the end of the legislative session.

Hackett, Allen and the other residents filed into a small room off of the governor's office and sat down with Cuomo aide Jim Malatras.

They expressed their fears, their voices shaking with anger.

They tried to convey the guilt they feel because they unknowingly let their children drink poisoned water, and they asked what was being done.

Malatras promised more direct contact between the governor's office and the residents and said

the Health Department is also “grappling” to fully understand the situation and the implications of PFOA in people’s bloodstreams, according to Karen DeWitt of New York State Public Radio.

“We will be the point of contact, if you have questions,” said Malatras, according to a recording made by DeWitt. “What’s important to the governor is that you have the cleanest, safest drinking water possible.”

The Cuomo administration also promised there will be blood testing on site in Petersburg, another Rensselaer County town that also has PFOA in its water and said it will help with costs of a study to find a new water supply for Hoosick Falls High School.

Both the governor and staff from Mt. Sinai will meet with Hoosick Falls residents soon, Malatras promised.

Some resident said the meeting was cathartic.

“A lot of things were cleared up and we learned a lot of things that they have done,” said Anna Wysocki, a senior at Hoosick Falls High School. “There’s a lot to be thankful for what they are doing. There’s just a lot to be done as well.”

Others were still troubled by the state’s response and called on the Legislature to move forward with hearings.

Republican Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin echoed the group’s calls.

He blasted Cuomo and his fellow lawmakers for ignoring the pleas of the residents, saying he believes it’s unacceptable that the state Department of Health knew the village water supply was contaminated for months before it warned residents not to drink from it.

“It’s an embarrassment to the government and his administration. I think you look at the way this was handled and I believe I’m right. They just don’t want it out there.” McLaughlin said. “If I’m wrong, hold the hearings. Prove me wrong.”

Some Hoosick Falls residents have filed a class-action lawsuit against Honeywell International and Saint-Gobain Performance Plastics, the companies that currently own the manufacturing plants identified by state investigators as the most likely sources of the contamination.

Department of Environmental Conservation officials recently announced they reached consent orders with both companies that will require them to initiate and pay for cleanup of several sites in and around Hoosick Falls.

In January, the Cuomo administration designated the contaminated areas around Hoosick Falls as a Superfund site and installed filters on water systems with elevated PFOA levels.

The trip to Albany came days after Hackett created a social media campaign featuring stark black and white photos of Hoosick Falls residents holding pieces of paper with their blood levels. Hackett’s is 266.

She fears that the elevated levels of PFOA are wreaking havoc on her family’s health.

On Wednesday, she carried photos of her grandchildren, ages 4 and 6, listing their blood levels of 117 and 142.

"My grandson has just been diagnosed autistic, my granddaughter has immune problems, my daughter has bone issues, my son's diabetes levels have skyrocketed in the last few years," Hackett said.

Loreen Hackett posted photos of her family showing their blood test results as the residents of Hoosick Falls, N.Y., demand answers to their water crisis.

(Loreen Hackett)

Maryann Jacobs says she allowed her children to go to school with their blood test numbers written on their hand.

(Maryann Jacobs)

A girl holds a sign as Hoosick Falls residents press Albany politicians for a solution Wednesday.

(Mike Groll/AP)

Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin (R-Troy) says the contamination is "an embarrassment to the government and his administration."

(Mike Groll/AP)

WRVO

Hoosick residents meet with Cuomo's top aide over water frustrations

By Karen DeWitt • 2 hours ago

Karen DeWitt / WRVO News

Hoosick Falls residents came to the Capitol on Wednesday to demand hearings on the water crisis that has revealed high levels of a toxic chemical in many people's bloodstreams. They did not get hearings but did get a private meeting with a top aide to Gov. Andrew Cuomo.

The Hoosick Falls parents, children and teachers say they are frightened over the high levels of the toxic chemical PFOA found in their blood in recent tests conducted by the state health department. They worry that they and their children will become ill, and many say they already have a string of unexplained diseases and conditions that are linked to exposure to the toxin.

Among them was Loreen Hackett, whose PFOA blood level was found to be 266 micrograms per liter. She carried pictures of her grandchildren Correy Aldrich, 6, whose PFOA blood level is 142, and Alyssa Aldrich, 4, whose blood level is 117. The average American's PFOA blood level is 2.

"I have bone issues, I have immune suppression problems, big time," said Hackett, who said Correy has just been diagnosed as autistic. Alyssa also has immune suppression problems, she said, and her son has diabetes.

"And these conditions have all been linked," she said.

The residents complained that the state health department has not given them enough answers, and they are also concerned over a news report that said officials in the health department knew about the heightened PFOA levels in the water 18 months before they warned residents of potential dangers.

After the residents, led by their Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, assembled outside the doors to Cuomo's suite of offices, they were permitted a meeting with Cuomo's director of state operations, Jim Malatras.

Malatras said he was sorry that Cuomo was busy with end-of-session issues and could not personally meet with the two dozen or so residents, but said he was willing to listen to their concerns and that the governor would meet with them at some point in the future.

"This is stuff that we're all learning about," Malatras said. "The unfortunate thing for you is that you're living it."

Malatras expressed sympathy for their plight, but it didn't take long for residents to voice their pent-up frustrations.

"I feel what you're going through," Malatras said.

"No, you don't," several residents said.

Mothers spoke of their guilt over feeding their children tainted water; others cited lack of information.

"We're being lied to," said village resident Josh Aldrich.

Malatras explained, for the first time, that the health department is also "grappling" to fully understand the situation and the implications of PFOA in people's bloodstreams, because he said more needs to be known about the toxin, which until recently was considered an unregulated chemical. He urged more residents to get their blood tested so that better long-term studies can be undertaken.

A number of times, Malatras tried to turn the focus away from the administration's handling of the situation to the polluters, including Saint Gobain, one of the parties the state has deemed responsible for the contamination. The company used PFOA for several years before stopping around a decade ago. He said the state is seeking reimbursement from companies who used the chemical for the money New York is already spending on cleanup efforts.

Malatras did not address accusations that Cuomo administration officials knew about the potential dangers of PFOA 18 months before they warned residents, but did say that once Cuomo became involved in early 2016, the governor told Malatras to "do everything humanly

possible" for Hoosick Falls residents. He also said the governor personally made sure that water filters installed in many homes were up to spec. They also declared part of the village a Superfund site.

Malatras also promised more direct contact between the governor's office and the residents.

"We will be the point of contact, if you have questions," said Malatras. "What's important to the governor is that you have the cleanest, safest drinking water possible."

He also said that if the residents want more outside involvement from health experts, such as doctors from Mount Sinai, they will get it.

At the end of the over hour long meeting, Hoosick Falls music teacher Rob Allen summed up many residents' feelings, saying that while they are pleased with the new assurances, "the next few weeks will be critical," in whether the governor and his aides can regain the trust of the citizens in the village.

The issue of whether hearings will be held on how the water crisis is handled remains unresolved. Democrats in the Assembly and Republicans in the Senate have the power to make that decision, but say while they have not ruled out the possibility of hearings, none are currently scheduled.

After the meeting, a spokesman for the governor says several new steps will be taken.

There will be blood testing on site in Petersburg, a neighboring town that also has PFOA in its water. The state will help with costs of a study to find a new water supply for Hoosick Falls High School, which so far has not found detectable levels of the toxin in its water. They say a health outcome reviewed now being looked at by experts at Mt Sinai will be released shortly, and that they will bring staff from Mt. Sinai to Hoosick Falls armory for an informational session soon.

TWC News

Hoosick Falls Residents Bring PFOA Concerns to Capitol

By Jorja Roman

Updated Wednesday, June 15, 2016 at 09:57 PM EDT

"This building responds to noise," said Assemblyman Steve McLaughlin, referring to the state capitol, "and although the folks here won't be yelling and screaming, make no mistake: This is noise. They need to be heard."

The Senate and Assembly may have not heard, but Governor Andrew Cuomo's administration did.

"Overall, I think it was a very productive meeting. They raised some issues that were new to us," said Jim Malatras, the director of state operations.

Residents gathered with McLaughlin at the Capitol on Wednesday to convince the legislature that hearings to discuss PFOA in Hoosick Falls are necessary. Instead, they got a sit-down meeting with Malatras.

"A lot of things were cleared up and we learned a lot of things that they have done. There's a lot to be thankful for what they are doing. There's just a lot to be done as well," said Anna Wysocki, a senior at Hoosick Falls High School.

The meeting was closed to the media. Hailey Bussey was glad someone within the governor's office spoke with them, but she said she didn't learn anything new.

"It was like being told the same thing we already know," she continued, "because my mom knows a lot about the water, but maybe some of the things we didn't know, but most of it, we already knew."

The residents will not give up until they know more about their community's contaminated water.

"I don't know what the future holds for my children, and I'm not worried about mine. I'm worried about them," said Mary Anne Jacobs, a Hoosick Falls resident.

"If you opened this, and this was your child and these were your numbers, what would you do?" asked resident Loreen Hackett. "What would you want to know? Wouldn't you want answers so that we can move forward?"

NY Post

Hoosick Falls deserves answers on its tainted water

By Post Editorial Board

June 15, 2016

Two dozen angry Hoosick Falls residents rallied at the state Capitol Wednesday, demanding answers on the Cuomo administration's bungling of their contaminated-water crisis. They deserve those answers — and so does the rest of New York.

"If they're going to ignore us, then I'm going to make sure they see us," said one Hoosicker, Loreen Hackett.

To his credit, Gov. Cuomo had a top aide, Jim Malatras, meet with the protesters. But a single private meeting isn't enough. What's needed are full legislative hearings.

Why, exactly, did Cuomo's environmental agency ignore federal guidance and wait nearly a year and a half to warn residents about the perfluorooctanoic acid (or PFOA) tainting their water? Sorry, the fear of "alarming" people isn't enough.

Less than two weeks ago, the people of Hoosick Falls started getting the results of state-

sponsored blood tests — which show elevated levels of PFOA. The chemical has been linked to cancer and other diseases — and it's turning up in nearby towns, too.

The governor wants the story to go away — and neither the Republicans who control the state Senate nor the Democrats who run the Assembly seem willing to cross him by holding hearings.

Back in February, Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie promised hearings by April, but then reneged. Sen. Kathy Marchione (R-Halfmoon) even said that "a hearing to point fingers isn't useful." Huh?

Accountability sure sounds useful to us.

Study to explore extending water, sewer in Hoosick

Possibly expanding water and sewer lines along Route 22

By Edward Damon

berkshireeagle.com

Posted: 06/15/2016 10:11:34 PM EDT

HOOSICK FALLS, N.Y. — Officials have given the green light to a study on extending municipal water and sewer lines in an effort they say would prevent future contamination from PFOA.

The Village Board on Wednesday unanimously adopted a resolution that allows the village to engage with a firm to study expanding utilities along state Route 22. The Town Board adopted a similar resolution on Monday.

The village and town, as separate municipalities, will split the cost of the \$46,000 study, to be carried out by the MRB Group, according to Mayor David Borge.

Officials are looking to have the study and accompanying engineering report completed by August. Borge said that's the deadline to be considered for funding under the Environmental Facilities Corporation's state revolving fund program.

The EFC is "highly encouraging" the municipalities to apply, according to Borge. The project could be eligible for grants or loans with zero or low interest.

Action by officials this week does not cover the cost of the overall project. Borge said both the town and village boards would need to have public hearings after the study. And each board would have to discuss "what's the best and affordable way" to complete a project.

"We have a lot of people looking at us. And we have some opportunities now that may not exist as time goes on," Borge said.

The Hoosick Falls Central School District, Borge said, "is looking at how much if any of that

\$23,000 it could contribute towards." Administrators with the Hoosac School have also expressed interest in having municipal water and sewer, he said.

The study would look at various options for extending the village water and sewer lines, Borge said. Such a project would bring service to residences on or near Route 22 — like homes on Bovie Hill and Wilson Hill Roads — as well as businesses on the outskirts. The study would also look at the system's capacity and how to address existing water pressure issues in areas like Snow Street.

The HFCSD is served by a private well and testing has not detected PFOA, or perfluorooctanoic acid, the chemical that contaminated the village water supply and numerous private wells. In January, the state said it would pay for a filter on the school's Route 22 campus, to protect people from possible future contamination. The granulated activated carbon (GAC) filter, similar to ones installed at the water treatment plant and in homes with contaminated wells, was installed in March, but it has not been turned on.

The agenda for Wednesday's Village Board meeting included numerous items, but was dominated by talk of water contaminated by PFOA.

Officials said water rebates to residents are being mailed out. To date, 862 water rebates have been mailed out, representing most of the single-family homes.

Resident Keith Cipperly questioned whether the rebate he received was accurate and whether the village would have any money left over from what it received from the state.

Borge said the rebates are reflective of water use from Oct. 1, 2015 to March 31, 2016. He said the village received \$178,478.87 from the state and would not have any money left over.

Cipperly asked: "If the figures are wrong, what are you going to do, go back through, figure things a little differently, and send another rebate to the homeowner?"

"At this time we don't think the figures are incorrect," Borge said. If a homeowner feels their rebate is incorrect, he said, they should contact the village clerk's office.

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